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*Environment and Urbanization* 2010 22: 67

DOI: 10.1177/0956247809356182

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# Embedding international migration: the response of Bolivian local governments and NGOs to international migration

GERY NIJENHUIS

Gery Nijenhuis is Assistant Professor of International Development Studies at the Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University. Her research interests focus on international migration and local development, local governance and participatory planning. Her recent publications include: "Geographies of regional and local development", Special Issue of the *Journal of Development Alternatives and Area Studies* Vol 27, No 3-4 (2008) (with P van Lindert); and "Development matters", *Geographical Studies on Development Processes and Policies*, (2006), Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University (with P van Lindert, A de Jong and G van Westen).

Address: International Development Studies, Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University, PO Box 80.115, 3508 TC, Utrecht, The Netherlands; e-mail: g.nijenhuis@geo.uu.nl

## ABSTRACT

International migration is an integral part of the lives of many people in the South, and many households add remittances to their income in order to finance the daily costs of living that cannot be met by their traditional source of income. In the literature, a debate has emerged on the impacts of these remittances on development, focusing in particular on the micro level, namely the impact on households. Many studies also contend that national governments should try to redirect the impacts of remittances. However, the role of actors in local governance structures seems to be overlooked in this discussion. We argue that in the discussion on managing development through remittances, local governments and other stakeholders at the local level – such as NGOs – might also play a role, especially in those countries that have implemented decentralization. However, thus far, interventions aimed at leveraging remittance flows and facilitating migration processes are only in an initial phase. Our study of 12 municipalities in Bolivia shows that a lack of knowledge and capacities among local governments and NGOs is a decisive factor.

**KEYWORDS** Bolivia / international migration / local development / local governments / local policies / NGOs

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, many countries in the South have experienced one of the most obvious outcomes of the globalizing world economy: international migration. Attracted by the demand for cheap labour, millions of people migrated during the second half of the twentieth century to other countries, mostly in the South but also in the North. Many of these migrants maintain tight bonds with their families in their countries of origin: they send money home and they exchange ideas and knowledge.

In the 1990s, many migrant-sending countries in the South implemented decentralization, namely the transfer of tasks, funds and responsibilities from the central to lower levels, often local, municipal levels. For many local governments, this implied assuming responsibility for the elaboration and implementation of local development policies, often in a more or less participatory way, for example with the participation of local stakeholders. It is here that one can observe a potential conflict: what does an external process such as international

migration mean for local development and local policies? To what extent are remittances considered a source of income by local governments? Do local governments and NGOs address international migration? Is it embedded in local policies? These questions are especially relevant since current debates on migration and development seem to focus exclusively on the potential role of remittances for development, thus sometimes ignoring the less desirable impacts it might have.

This paper deals with the relationship between international migration and local development from the governance perspective. We analyze the international migration flow from Bolivia, its impacts as perceived at the local level and the responses of local governments and NGOs. We first review the existing body of literature on international migration, local development and local governance. We then briefly describe the context of Bolivian international migration and its main characteristics, and explore the ways in which these migration flows impact on local development in the areas of origin and the way international migration is embedded in local policies. In doing so, we explicitly focus on policies and projects by local governments and NGOs.

## II. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE: A QUICK SCAN OF THE LITERATURE

Even a quick bibliographical search on the individual concepts of international migration, local development and local governance results in an impressive list of literature. Each of these concepts has been thoroughly studied in the last 15 years, also in combination with the other concepts.<sup>(1)</sup> Most literature on migration and development in the Latin American context focuses on the development impacts of remittances – the money sent by migrants to their relatives in their countries of origin – at the macro, national level and at the micro, local level.<sup>(2)</sup> Within the existing body of literature, two main views dominate the debate, namely that of the optimists and that of the pessimists. The former consider remittances a potential tool for development: this tool will get people out of poverty, stimulate the local economy through the additional money available to households to purchase goods, and will open up new development opportunities for people.<sup>(3)</sup> Using a large data set composed of 71 countries, Adams and Page state that, on the national level, “...*both international migration and remittances have a strong, statistically significant impact on reducing poverty in the developing world.*”<sup>(4)</sup> In an overview of the main trends and patterns with respect to migration and remittances, Page and Plaza are also quite positive about the potential role of remittances in reducing poverty at the household level.<sup>(5)</sup>

Other studies are less positive about the development impacts of remittances. These authors argue that migration and remittances will result in an increasing dependence by households and regions on this specific source of income. Also, households will invest not in activities that will stimulate the economy in the longer term, such as productive activities, but rather in consumption goods, such as TV sets, furniture, etc. After making a comparison of five major emigration countries, Castles concludes that although there could be a positive impacts on the population of the sending country, “...*strategies of ‘remittance-led development’ seem simplistic and naive.*”<sup>(6)</sup> This might lead to the conclusion that a positive relationship

1. See also De Haas, H (2006), “Migration, remittances and regional development in southern Morocco”, *Geoforum* 37, pages 565–580.

2. Cohen, J (2005), “Remittance outcomes and migration: theoretical contests, real opportunities”, *Studies in Comparative International Development* Vol 40, No 1, Spring, pages 88–112; also Inter-American Dialogue (2007), *Inter-American Dialogue Conference Report: Research on Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean*, 14 March, available at <http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/>, cited 24 June 2008.

3. See reference 2, Cohen (2005).

4. Adams, R and J Page (2005), “Do international migration and remittances reduce poverty in developing countries?”, *World Development* Vol 33, No 10, page 1660.

5. Page, J and S Plaza (2005), “Migration remittances and development: a review of global evidence”, *Journal of African Economies* Vol 00, AERC Supplement, pages 245–336.

6. Castles, S (2006), "Comparing the experience of five major emigration countries", *Migración y Desarrollo* No 7, Second Semester, page 201.

7. Orozco, M and K Welle (2005), "Hometown associations and development: a look at ownership, sustainability, correspondence and replicability", Inter-American Dialogue, available at <http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=561678>; also Bada, X (2003), "Mexican hometown associations", *Citizen Action in the Americas* No 5, March.

8. See also Peraza, X (2008), "Migrant-local government relationships in sending communities: the power of politics in post-war El Salvador", *Migraciones Internacionales* Vol 4, No 3, January-June, pages 105-130.

9. Fox, J and X Bada (2008), "Migrant organization and hometown impacts in rural Mexico", *Journal of Agrarian Change* Vol 8, Nos 2 and 3, April and July, pages 435-461.

10. Levitt, P (1998), "Social remittances: migration drives local level forms of cultural diffusion", *International Migration Review* Vol 32, No 4, pages 926-948.

11. See reference 9.

12. VanWey, L, C Tucker and E McConnell (2005), "Community organization, migration and remittances in Oaxaca", *Latin American Research Review* Vol 40, No 1, pages 83-107.

13. Orozco, M (2006), *Between Hardship and Hope: Remittances and the Local Economy in Latin America*, Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank, Washington DC, page 3.

between migration, remittances and development should not be taken for granted, and that many issues influence this relationship.

A valuable, relatively new contribution to this debate comes from studies that emphasize the potential role of hometown associations (HTAs – organizations of migrants who originate from the same municipality or community in a certain host country), which collectively try to stimulate development in the sending area by raising funds to finance the execution of projects mainly in the social sphere.<sup>(7)</sup> Although HTAs themselves are not new (the most prominent date back to the 1950s), the scale of their operations and the recognition of their potential role in development are new.

From the perspective of this paper, an interesting element within this discussion is that these studies often include the role of local stakeholders in their analysis of the contribution of HTAs to development. This is contrary to most of the literature that deals with migration and development at the local level, which is often from an economic or political perspective.<sup>(8)</sup> Studies in the economic category that attempt to explain the complex relationship between migration and development at the local level are concerned with whether or not remittances result in an increase in income at the household level in sending regions, or result in economic development in their countries of origin. A well-documented case in this respect is the migration between Mexico and the United States. However, the majority of these studies do not discuss the relationship with the local government or other stakeholders within the local governance structure.

The focus of the second group of studies is on the link with local government, but mainly from a political perspective. Questions dealt with are the transfer of ideologies – for example ideas, on democratization – and the role of migrants (or return migrants) as political leaders in the sending areas.<sup>(9)</sup> In this way, the discussion fits the debate on social remittances: the transfer of ideas, knowledge and values within transnational space.<sup>(10)</sup>

Only a few studies integrate both perspectives – that is, development and local governance systems – such as the contribution by Fox and Bada on rural Mexico,<sup>(11)</sup> which describes the interaction between migration, development and rural democratization. They show that migration can result in migrants pressuring local governments to be given a bigger voice in local decision-making. Another study<sup>(12)</sup> looked at the compatibility of traditional governance systems in Oaxaca with high migration rates. They argue that strong forms of community organization can be a decisive factor in the contribution of migration to development. In his study, Orozco analyzes the way in which Latin American local economies effectively absorb remittances into their productive base. He concludes that "...the government, private sector and civil society actors have not in any way considered an approach to leveraging remittances to expand growth. What's more, no support networks exist to address the needs of the families of migrants."<sup>(13)</sup>

Although there are opposing views with respect to the relationship between migration and development, governments throughout the world have tried to influence the link between the two. An example of such an intervention is the "3-for-1" community development programme in Mexico. This is a matching grant programme according to which the local, federal and state governments each contribute to increase the flow of remittances. In an evaluation of the 3-for-1 project, municipal staff were

not content with the selection of projects to be funded. Local governments had to select projects that were not a priority in local policies, and participation in the 3-for-1 fund meant an extra administrative burden since they had to report to the migrants regarding project progress and spending.<sup>(14)</sup> Other examples of government intervention at the national and local levels in receiving countries are the imposition of taxes on remittances, offering support to HTAs and making it more attractive for migrants to invest in their areas of origin.

This review of the literature on migration, local development and local governance shows that there is a rich collection of studies. The overwhelming majority of them focus on migration and development at both the national level and the household and local level. Only a few of these more or less explicitly pay attention to the way migration-induced development is embedded in local governance structures. This sets the stage for a discussion of the relation between these concepts in the case of Bolivia.

### III. BOLIVIAN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: FROM INTRA-REGIONAL TO INTERCONTINENTAL FLOWS

International migration is a relatively recent phenomenon in Bolivia. In the 1970s and 1980s, migration in Bolivia was mainly rural-urban migration, an important livelihood strategy of poor rural households to survive. In the 1980s, inter-departmental migration increased strongly. The lowlands and the coca-producing Chapare region were popular destinations. Besides permanent settlement – which the Bolivian government stimulated in the 1970s by introducing agricultural colonization policies – seasonal and circular migration also took place, with people trying to earn some extra income in the *zafra* (the sugarcane production in the lowlands) and in the informal sector of the larger cities. Only later, in the 1980s and 1990s, did Bolivians cross the national borders in search of a better life. The United States, Argentina and Brazil were the most important destinations. In Argentina, Bolivians worked in the construction and textile sectors and a few in agriculture. Bolivians in Brazil occupied mainly jobs in the garment industry. Later on, after the economic crisis in Argentina in 2001 and the 9/11 events in the United States, Bolivians looked for other destinations.<sup>(15)</sup>

Precise information on the outflow of Bolivians, which is mainly motivated by the search for work, more income and improved living conditions,<sup>(16)</sup> is hard to find. According to official statistics, in 2001 only 0.1 per cent of the Bolivian population lived abroad.<sup>(17)</sup> However, many studies and researchers working on this theme consider this a huge underestimation, since irregular migration and unofficial border crossings are not taken into account.<sup>(18)</sup> As such, it is worthwhile to look at the information available in the main destination countries. According to estimates based on these sources, there are more than 2.5 million Bolivians involved in international migration, representing more than 25 per cent of the country's entire population. According to these estimates,<sup>(19)</sup> 1–1.5 million Bolivians live in Argentina, almost 1 million live in the United States and more than 500,000 live in Brazil.<sup>(20)</sup> In addition, Spain is a relatively new destination, and the number of Bolivians in Spain has

14. See reference 9, page 448.

15. Dulón, R (2008), "Migración transnacional de Bolivianos y Bolivianas a la Argentina y su impacto en comunidades de origen", Informe Final Convocatoria Chorlavi, Sucre, Bolivia.

16. Farah, I and C Sánchez (2001), "Bolivia: an assessment of the international labour migration situation. The case of female labour migrants", GENPROM Working Paper No 1, ILO, Geneva; also Roncken, T and A Forsberg (2007), "Los efectos y consecuencias socioeconómicos, culturales y políticos de la migración internacional en los lugares

de origen de los emigrantes Bolivianos”, PIEB–Acción Andina, La Paz.

17. See Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Censo 2001, available at [www.ine.gov.bo](http://www.ine.gov.bo).

18. See reference 16, Farah and Sánchez (2001).

19. ICBE (2008), “Bolivia: migración, remesas y desempleo”, available at [www.ibce.org.bo](http://www.ibce.org.bo), cited 24 April 2008.

20. See reference 16, Roncken and Forsberg (2007).

21. This number is based on the number of Bolivians registered with the Padrón municipality (i.e. 242,496), with an additional 53,000 representing those Bolivians (22 per cent) who have not registered. See ACOBE (2007), “Situación general de los Bolivianos en España”, ACOBE, La Paz. By registering, people – including those who are irregular – acquire access to free social services such as education and health.

22. Banco Central de Bolivia (2008), “Remesas a Bolivia”, available at <http://www.bcb.gov.bo/sitio/index.php>.

23. Fieldwork was conducted in the municipalities of Monteagudo, Icla, Yotala, Presto, Sopachuy and Huacareta (all department of Chuquisaca) in 2007–2008, and in the municipalities of Cercado (the city of Cochabamba), Tarata, Cliza, Punata, Arani and Totorá (all department of Cochabamba) in 2009. I would like to thank Irene van den Bogaardt for her data collection and data analysis in Cochabamba (see also van den Bogaardt, Irene (2009), “Cochabambinos, ‘born to migrate’: a governance perspective on international migration and

increased dramatically from 6,000 in 2001 to almost 300,000 in 2008.<sup>(21)</sup> The main reasons for this popularity are the former colonial tie and the fact that until April 2007, Bolivians could enter Spain on tourist visas. The peak years of the Bolivian exodus to Spain were 2006 and 2007. In early 2007, the Bolivian airline company Lloyd Aereo Boliviano left for Madrid twice a week and returned almost empty. Airline tickets, costing US\$ 1,000 each, were sold out months in advance and Bolivians had to queue up for a passport at the offices of the migration service.

Although most Bolivian migrants in the USA and Spain, in particular, are over-qualified and earn much less than their “native” colleagues in similar positions, they still earn a considerable amount by Bolivian standards and also compared to the labour position of those migrants who remain within Latin America. Furthermore, a large part of their earnings is remitted to their relatives back home, which makes it interesting to study. According to data from the Banco Central de Bolivia, in 2008, Bolivian migrants abroad sent US\$ 1.097 million back to Bolivia through formal channels, twice the amount of foreign direct investment.<sup>(22)</sup> The most important source country was Spain (40 per cent), followed by the United States (22 per cent) and Argentina (17 per cent). In 2008, officially registered remittances alone accounted for 8 per cent of GDP in Bolivia.

In summary, international migration flows from Bolivia have increased in intensity and have become more diverse over the years. Most migrants have one characteristic in common: they maintain bonds with their relatives in their countries of origin, partly by sending remittances. In the following sections, we examine the main impacts of the current international migration flows from Bolivia, mainly from the perspective of the stakeholders in the local governance structure, that is, the local governments and NGOs. First, however, we shall introduce the research context.

#### IV. THE LOCAL CONTEXT: 12 BOLIVIAN MUNICIPALITIES

This contribution is based on fieldwork conducted in 2008 and 2009 in 12 Bolivian municipalities – six in the department of Cochabamba and six in the department of Chuquisaca. The study draws on a range of research methodologies, including:

- interviews with key local stakeholders from local governments, local administrations and NGOs working in the municipalities;<sup>(23)</sup> and
- document analysis (such as planning documents and strategic notes of local governments and NGOs, municipal budgetary reports).

The research municipalities that were selected represent urban, semi-urban and rural municipalities in the departments of Cochabamba and Chuquisaca, each experiencing international migration to a different extent with respect to main destinations, duration and intensity. In some municipalities, there are communities that have seen more than 60 per cent of the adult population migrating abroad, while in other municipalities only a few communities are involved in international migration.

The department of Cochabamba, located in the centre of Bolivia, and the capital city Cochabamba in particular, is the most important sending area with respect to international migration.<sup>(24)</sup> The importance of international

migration as livelihood strategy has also been observed in previous research in three rural municipalities in the same department,<sup>(25)</sup> which found that 46 per cent of the households had at least one family member abroad. Main destinations are the USA and Spain. Also, the department of Chuquisaca – one of the country's poorest areas with a population that depends highly on subsistence agriculture – traditionally has experienced a huge outflow of people, and according to the last population census many municipalities experienced a decrease in population in the period 1991–2001.<sup>(26)</sup> Argentina and Spain are the most important destinations.

The municipal level is quite new in Bolivia. In 1994, the country introduced an ambitious decentralization policy, which transferred funds and responsibilities from the central to the local level of the municipalities. Each year, 20 per cent of the national tax income is distributed among the 314 municipalities, according to the number of inhabitants. The municipalities are now responsible for infrastructure in the fields of education, health, transport and sports and also for productive infrastructure, in order to support local development.

A remarkable feature of the Bolivian model of decentralization is the institutionalization of popular participation in local decision-making. The population – organized in territorially based neighbourhood committees, peasant communities and indigenous communities – can identify their priorities for investment. The whole process of participation is meticulously regulated by procedures. Each municipality is meant to deliver a five-year development plan, formulated with the involvement of the citizens. Each year, the contents of the plan are translated into annual plans consisting of projects to be carried out. Despite several changes in government, and faced with problems such as corruption and bad coordination, the process of participatory planning has remained dynamic, and many studies<sup>(27)</sup> conclude that the deprived rural population in particular has gained greater access to basic services. An important feature of the Bolivian decentralization model is that the local level has become one of the main drivers of local development, whereby the population can take an active role by demanding their own projects.

Alongside local governments, NGOs have long been considered the most important actor in Bolivia's rural as well as urban areas. Bolivia counts more than 550 NGOs, the majority of these being national. Although NGOs are still important, a problematic feature of the Bolivian decentralization model is the limited "room for manoeuvre" assigned to them: in theory they are not recognized as formal actors in local planning and, as such, depend on the willingness of the local government to be involved.

## V. THE LOCAL RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

In the southern districts of the city of Cochabamba, the landscape has been dramatically altered: here and there amidst the adobe houses and their thatched roofs, one sees considerably more spacious migrant housing; these houses are built of brick and tile and are neatly painted yellow or green. In the community of Pampa Huasi (municipality of Presto), one sees lined up in front of the adobe houses Nissan jeeps financed with remittances from abroad. In Bolivia, the impacts of international migration are part of everyday life.

local development", MSc thesis, IDS, Utrecht University), and Geke Weenink for her help in collecting the data in Chuquisaca.

24. See reference 19.

25. Jones, R and L de la Torre (2008), "Diminished or revitalized tradition of return? Transnational migration in Bolivia's Valle Alto", Working Paper 172, Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego.

26. INE (2001), *Censo de Población y Vivienda*, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, La Paz, Bolivia.

27. Booth, D, S Clisby and C Widmark (1997), *Popular Participation: Democratizing the State in Rural Bolivia*, Report to SIDA commissioned through the Development Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University; also Aviles Irahola, D (2005), *Popular Participation, Decentralization and Local Power Relations in Bolivia*, Cuvillier Verlag, Göttingen; and Nijenhuis, G (2002), "Decentralization and popular participation in Bolivia. The link between local governance and local development", *Nederlandse Geografische Studies* No 299, NGS, Utrecht.

The increases in international migration and the related inflow of remittances have led to different responses at the local level in Bolivia. In this section, we will first briefly discuss the main impacts of international migration, as perceived by local governments and NGOs. Then we will analyze the projects and activities related to international migration initiated by local governments and NGOs.

### a. Perceptions of impact

One of the first issues that came to the fore during the interviews was that all interviewees, being representatives of governments, NGOs or community organizations, consider financial remittances a blessing for their region because of the considerable amount of money involved.<sup>(28)</sup> However, when asked about the impacts of these remittances on development, all respondents stated that the remittances hardly resulted in development in the longer term. A representative of the municipality of Poroma mentioned that: *“The money is mostly spent on improving housing conditions and on furniture and cars: in most cases, it’s not very sustainable for development in the longer term.”* According to the interviewees, investments in means of production – such as machinery, tools or other business equipment, tractors, fertilizers and improved seed varieties – that could in the longer term result in an improvement in the position of households, are often absent.

De-population, the loss of people, is another impact felt predominantly in the more rural municipalities. Some communities really become deserted, which of course puts a stop to economic development. Moreover, some municipalities face the problem of ageing, as it is mainly the children and the elderly who remain. Households lack the labour input of the migrants, and as a consequence some activities are abandoned. An example is the non-irrigated cultivation in Yotala; those who remain – mostly children and the elderly – simply do not have the time to continue this method of production.

The loss of adult population has another consequence, one that is more related to the sociopolitical structure in the municipalities, namely participation in local decision-making. Traditionally, communal life in Bolivia is characterized by strong intra-communal ties, with regular meetings and discussions on communal issues such as neighbourhood improvement projects, communal land, participation in NGO projects, etc. Within this sociopolitical system, it is the adult males who perform communal leadership tasks within a rotating system. This traditional system was linked to access to resources through the Law on Popular Participation (1994). With increasing trends of international migration, social cohesion at the communal level decreases, very young adults have to take over communal leadership, and often the ties with local government are loosened, which can result in a decrease in funds to be invested in the community.<sup>(29)</sup>

Another risk related to international migration that was mentioned by local governments is the decrease in municipal budgets. Each year, Bolivian municipalities receive money from the country’s central government to fund investments at the local level in health and education and productive infrastructure. The amount of money transferred to each municipality is based on the number of inhabitants according to the

28. Estimates of the amount of money sent vary greatly, from approximately US\$ 1,000 to US\$ 7,000 per household per year. What is remarkable is that the recent shift of migration flows towards Spain appears to have resulted in larger remittances being sent back to the areas of origin compared to the migrants in Argentina. This can be explained by the higher wages of migrants in Spain.

29. See reference 27, Nijenhuis (2002).



census, which is carried out every 10 years. The last census was in 2001, so municipalities do not yet have to face the consequences of the current outflow to Spain. However, migration will certainly influence municipal budgets in the next census, which is scheduled for 2010.

A more structural problem mentioned by the interviewees in the more rural municipalities is that the migrants who do return to Bolivia do not always return to their communities in rural areas. In these areas, the opportunities to invest are limited, and their savings will not generate much. Most representatives of the local governments, as well as NGOs, said that return migrants preferred to start a new life in the cities of Bolivia, namely La Paz, Santa Cruz or Cochabamba.

Finally, a negative impact often mentioned is the split up of families, with one or both parents migrating abroad, leaving children behind. Disintegration of families is often considered to be the main reason for non-attendance at school, psychological problems, violence among youths, and drug and alcohol abuse.

## b. Local responses to international migration

Despite the inflow of remittances, the majority of local governments in the research municipalities viewed migration mainly as a problem. However, until now, the initiatives developed by local governments to cope with the negative impacts and, for example, to steer the use of remittances, have been limited. To the local governments we interviewed, migration is an intrinsic characteristic of the region and, as such, not specifically referred to in policy documents. Although all five-year municipal development plans pay some attention to migration, the analysis is almost always limited to an account of the number of migrants and the reasons for their leaving. With regard to remittances, they are hardly taken into account by most local governments in the research area. As a key informant put it: *"This is just private money, we cannot manage that money."*

Only three of the 12 local governments (Table 1) actually directly address international migration in their policies and plans. All these municipalities are located in the department of Cochabamba.

Looking at the main characteristics of these projects, we can distinguish between social activities and economic activities.

Examples of social projects are the programmes aimed at family strengthening in Cochabamba, focusing on abandoned children. A specific element of such a programme is the *Yo si puedo* project<sup>(30)</sup> directed towards the illiterate elderly, who are trained to help their abandoned grandchildren with homework. Another example is the mini-series produced by the local television network in Cliza – with local actors from Cliza – that pays attention to the negative impacts of international migration and makes people aware of the possible positive impacts of remittances, illustrated for example through productive investments. Another category includes programmes that aim to strengthen the ties between migrants abroad and their families in Bolivia.

Policies and plans oriented towards the more economic aspects of international migration are not very common among most local governments.<sup>(31)</sup> The only example we encountered was the migrant centre that is supported by the local government of the city of Cochabamba. This centre aims to support migrants when they return, by offering them

30. This translates as the "Yes I can" project.

31. Of course, in every municipality one can find projects that aim at an increase in production or at employment generation. According to this study, these are classified as policies that indirectly address international migration, since they are focused in general on economic development, vocational training and other activities.

**TABLE 1**  
**Local government and NGO projects and activities aimed directly at international migration**

| Municipality | International migration as a topic in policies and activities                         |  |
|--------------|---|--|
|              | Local government  | NGOs   |
| Poroma       |   | Training future migrants   |
| Yotala       |   | Legal support<br>Association of relatives<br>Training future migrants<br>Newsletter  |
| Presto       |   | Training future migrants   |
| Sopachuy     |   |  |
| Monteagudo   |   |  |
| Huacareta    |   |  |
| Cochabamba   | Family strengthening<br>Defence for children: psychological, legal and social support | Creating awareness<br>Research<br>Circular migration project to Spain<br>Relief for children of migrant parents<br>Legal mediation: migrant rights |
| Tarata       |   | Remittances investment<br>Relief centre: children of migrant parents   |
| Cliza        | Local television series   | Reintegration of return migrants from Italy into milk industries<br>Research   |
| Punata       |   | Reintegration of return migrants from Italy into milk industries   |
| Arani        | Employment generation programmes  | Integration of female migrants<br>Creating entrepreneurial culture in order to avoid migration   |
| Totora       |   |  |

SOURCE: Interviews and document review.

information on jobs in Cochabamba and microcredits to facilitate the set up of microenterprises. This initiative can be traced back directly to the twinning of the municipality of Cochabamba with the municipality of Bergamo.

Most NGOs have a realistic view on international migration. They see it as something that cannot be stopped; one simply has to live with it. The idea is that if people are going to leave, they should be well prepared for it. As such, international migration appears to be much more embedded in the policies of NGOs than is the case among local governments, with 17 of the 45 NGOs interviewed having activities related to international migration. Similar to local governments, most of these NGOs are located in the department of Cochabamba. With respect to the type of interventions, three different categories of projects can be distinguished.

First, a large number of the projects initiated address social aspects, such as support to children in the field of homework supervision in Tarata, and the foundation for relatives of migrants in Yotala. Relatives of migrants meet every week and exchange ideas and experiences.

A second category of activities consists of legal support to migrants abroad, for example to migrants whose human rights are being violated and/or who are maltreated. NGOs working in this field often collaborate closely with embassies and consulates abroad.<sup>(32)</sup>

A third category of projects involves those directly related to economic development. Some of these projects are directed at future migrants and aim to prepare them through vocational training and legal support. Projects also exist that aim at circular migration,<sup>(33)</sup> and support migrants during a short stay in Spain. Here, the NGO arranges work contracts and permits, and training in preparation. In this case, 16 persons are contracted, who leave for 5–6 months to work on fruit plantations near Barcelona. The advantages of such a programme are the limited risks for family disintegration and a process that is fully controlled.

Other projects aim at return migrants, such as the project that supports Bolivian return migrants from Bergamo to start a microenterprise, in this case as milk farmers. Return migrants are introduced to milk production and supported with training and contacts with the milk factory. This project forms part of the twinning relation of the municipality of Cochabamba with Bergamo. Projects aimed at microcredit are also found within other NGOs, often in cooperation with NGOs in the host country.

Besides these projects, which attempt to facilitate the migration process, NGOs continue their more “traditional” activities in the field of rural development. Like the local governments, the NGOs believe that besides preparing migrants, making the rural areas more attractive in the sense of agricultural development would also help to solve the migration “problem”. However, in the implementation of projects, such as irrigation or vocational training, they are confronted with migration. Many of these projects are aimed at younger people: later, they will be able to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired for the betterment of their community. NGOs encounter difficulties in finding sufficient numbers of young people to participate in their projects, and thus in achieving their aims. A final issue mentioned by NGOs is that during project implementation, the target group that participates also migrates, which means that NGOs have to start all over again.

## VI. EXPLAINING THE “EMBEDDEDNESS” OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN LOCAL POLICIES

Although migration is part of daily life in Bolivia, and most actors at the local level are faced with its consequences every day, our findings show that for local governments, international migration is not a dominant issue on the local policy agenda. NGOs are much more involved in projects and activities that aim to facilitate migration or that mitigate the negative impacts. In this section, we will briefly discuss the factors that explain the “embeddedness” of international migration into the local agenda.

With regard to local governments, these are mainly concerned with basic service delivery in health and education: that is their core business, which consumes a large amount of time, energy and funds. Also, local governments have to operate in a highly politicized environment; to survive demands visible projects. One can score with schools, health posts or a new town square; however, a project aimed at attracting remittances is not that visible. Moreover, a lack of flexibility is observed with respect

32. The APDHC negotiations concerning Bolivian migrants in Russia are an example of this; with this support, migrants could return to Bolivia.

33. The Spanish–Bolivian NGO AMIBE implements this project in the department of Cochabamba.

to the planning process. Some of the local governments mentioned that they do not work on migration because it has not been identified as a priority and, as such, was not included in the five-year development plans. However, one may wonder to what extent this is indeed the case, as in the past, local governments have not had much trouble disregarding the five-year plans. In our view, much more important is that the majority of local governments state that they simply do not know how to deal with international migration as a topic in policies and planning. They have limited or no knowledge on best practices and do not know where to start. Also, most local governments are quite reluctant when it comes to influencing the final destination of the remittances. Migration often involves individuals and their families, and almost all actors are of the opinion that is very difficult to convince people that they should invest in communal issues. Migration and the resulting remittances are a private affair, and so far local governments do not intend to appropriate any part of the remittances in order to strengthen the local economy.

For NGOs, the fact that they depend on external funds is sometimes a limitation: when migration is not recognized as a core business of the funding entity, it is hard to get funding for projects aimed at international migration. Another issue mentioned by NGOs is that it is hard to reach migrant families and, later on, to keep them involved. Ideally, one would cooperate in this respect with local and departmental governments; however, most NGOs indicate that it is difficult to cooperate with local governments as they often do not consider international migration as a theme they should work on. This is also illustrated by the fact that only two of the 17 projects carried out by NGOs involve cooperation with a local government.

## VII. FINAL COMMENTS

In this paper, we have explored the relationship between international migration, local development and local governance, by analyzing the embeddedness of international migration as a topic in local policies of local governments and NGOs; we have described how this works in practice in 12 municipalities in Bolivia.

We observed a vacuum in the literature on the relationship between international migration and local development from a local governance perspective: only a few studies address these topics in relation to each other.

In our study, we have highlighted the interventions aimed at international migration by local governments and NGOs in twelve urban, semi-urban and rural municipalities in Bolivia. Our findings show that among local governments, international migration is not a high priority, at least not at the policy level. Only a few local governments facilitate projects aimed at international migration, and most of these are social projects aimed at supporting children and other relatives of migrants. In fact, only one local government facilitated one project aimed at economic development, namely the integration of return migrants into the labour market. Among NGOs, we encountered a broader range of interventions aimed at international migration and its impacts, comprising both economic and social projects.

Both local governments and NGOs are faced with a number of limitations regarding the integration into their policies of international

migration and its impacts, such as a lack of capacities and knowledge, political issues (such as the demand for visible projects) and – in particular for local governments – a lack of flexibility in the current planning procedures. This corresponds partly with the findings of Orozco who, based on a study among five semi-urban cities in Latin America,<sup>(34)</sup> concludes that mayors and municipal staff do not have the capacity and resources to properly address migration and remittances.

The study of the embeddedness of international migration into the policies of local governments and NGOs is still in its infancy. To enhance our understanding of the complex relationship between international migration, local development and local governance, more research is needed. This research should systematically explore this topic and, preferably, compare different migratory flows.

34. Orozco, M (2009), "Remittances in Latin America and the Caribbean: their impact on local economies and the response of local governments", *Inter-American Dialogue*, May, page 37.

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